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# REPORT ON MODALITIES OF THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ON INVENTORIES OF RESEARCH AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Note by the Secretariat

1. In its decision 10/7, taken at its tenth session, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention to Combat Desertification (INCD) invited members to submit to the Interim Secretariat suggestions on the modalities of the work of the Commission on Science and Technology (CST) on:

(a) inventories of research, traditional and local technology, knowledge, know-how and practices; and

(b) research priorities.

It further requested the Secretariat to submit a report based on the submissions for consideration by the CST at its first session. This note is based on replies from ten INCD members and three organizations and is intended to constitute that report.

*Inventories of research*

2. The feasibility and utility of preparing global inventories of research was questioned by a number of INCD members and organizations. Some members expressed the view that such preparation on a global basis would be cumbersome and costly, and the purpose unclear. A fuller discussion at the CST would need to precede any further work in this area.

3. There may be a role for the CST in the standardization of the presentation of the data to be used in research inventories developed by regions or subregions.

*Inventories of traditional knowledge*

4. The value and relevance of traditional and local technology, knowledge, know-how and practices is recognized in the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) (article 18, paragraph 2(a); article 20, paragraph 6). As to inventories of traditional and local technology, knowledge, know-how and practices, a number of initiatives have already taken place, particularly in the Sahel region. In 1997, the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) undertook a study of rural know-how in the areas of water and soil conservation, protection and restoration of soil and the analysis of data in management of natural resources. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has an ongoing initiative identifying successful land use practices, using indigenous

and new technologies. UNEP has joined with others in identifying and disseminating successful soil and water conservation techniques, and collaborates with the International Development Research Centre of Canada in identifying local and traditional indicators. As well, the Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (OSS) has produced "Stratégie 2000 de l'OSS" dealing with this matter.

5. Article 18, paragraph 2 (a) of the Convention provides that: "The Parties shall, according to their respective capabilities, and subject to their respective national legislation and/or policies, protect, promote and use in particular relevant traditional and local technology, knowledge, know-how and practices, and to that end, they undertake to:

(a) make inventories of such technology, knowledge, know-how and practices and their potential uses with the participation of local populations, and disseminate such information, where appropriate, in cooperation with relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations."

6. Thus, the CCD contemplates that such inventories will be prepared by the Parties themselves (which could be undertaken in the local or regional context).

7. Accordingly the CST might wish to focus on developing methodologies for information-sharing, disseminating inventories and ways to link traditional knowledge to modern technologies and methods. It might request the Secretariat to prepare a commentary on the overall role of traditional and local technology and how it might be linked to modern technology, where appropriate.

8. The methodology developed for preparing inventories might take account of the need to examine factors leading to the success or failure of certain techniques.

*Research priorities*

9. Research priorities vary from country to country, region to region, continent to continent. Separate subjective and objective variables are at play. The Convention addresses research priorities in article 17, paragraph 2 as follows: "Research priorities for particular regions and subregions, reflecting different local conditions, should be included in action programmes. The Conference shall review research priorities periodically on the advice of the Committee on Science and Technology."

10. Thus the Convention approaches the question of research priorities by recognizing the importance of research priorities for particular regions and subregions being included in action programmes, and giving to the COP the role of periodically reviewing such priorities, once established in the regional or subregional context, on the advice of the CST.

11. The draft terms of reference of the CST (ICCD/COP(1)/2) are consistent with this approach. Article 2, paragraph (a)(iv) provides that the functions of the CST include advising "on possible research priorities for particular regions and subregions, reflecting different local conditions."

12. In this context, it may be appropriate for the CST to embark on work on research priorities once it is in receipt of national or other reports submitted in accordance with article 10, paragraph 2(g) and information exchanged in the context of article 16. One role of the CST in this area might thus be to monitor research priorities reported in the national reports. This manner of proceeding would be consistent with the demand-driven approach and local participation emphasized by the Convention, and thus be closely linked to implementation. The CST could also then discuss and advise on participative and demand-driven methodologies for the setting of research priorities. This work might also be enhanced following the setting up of a network of experts and organizations.

13. The view was expressed in the submissions that in the prioritization process, an assessment is required of the degree to which research carried out has been able to address real problems on the ground.